



Kentucky Derby Update

Thursday, April 29, 2021

BROOKLYN STRONG GALLOPS AT CHURCHILL DOWNS FOR FIRST TIME; DERBY HOPEFULS BEAT THE RAIN BUT NOT THE SLOP

LOUISVILLE, KY (Thursday, April 29, 2021) – Mark Schwartz's **Brooklyn Strong** made his first appearance on the track at Churchill Downs Thursday morning, galloping a mile and a half over sloppy conditions caused by heavy overnight rains.

Steady rain was forecast all morning, but other than a few sprinkles during training hours everyone got their morning activity done before the precipitation began with interest at 9:15.

BOURBONIC, DYNAMIC ONE, KNOWN AGENDA, SAINTHOOD – Trainer **Todd Pletcher** had weather concerns Thursday morning with a sizable rain storm projected to reappear at Churchill Downs in the 7 a.m. hour. So rather than wait for the 7:30-7:45 Derby/Oaks special training period as he had been doing in previous days with his Derby foursome, he got them going early.

At 6 o'clock, he brought out **Known Agenda** (with exercise rider **Hector Ramos** in the tack) along with stablemate **Dynamic One** (with **Carlos Perez Quevedo** up) and the pair proceeded to gallop nine furlongs over a muddy strip. Twenty minutes later he had **Bourbonic** (with Ramos aboard) and **Sainthood** (handled by **Amelia Green**) trackside for a similar gallop and a quick return to the cozy confines of Barn 42.

"We're expecting rain around 7 so we wanted to get ahead of it," the conditioner said. "We kept it simple out there today; get them out, get them around, get them back home safe."

It worked just fine for his quartet. They got their exercise, they stayed dry and so did their riders and trainer.

BROOKLYN STRONG – The Cinderella story of this year's Kentucky Derby could be that of **Mark Schwartz's Brooklyn Strong**, a \$5,000 purchase who is getting into the 20-horse field by virtue of the 10 points he earned with his upset victory in the Remsen Stakes (GII) last December at Aqueduct. Among the horses he beat that day was eventual Florida Derby (GI) winner and fellow Derby hopeful **Known Agenda**.

Brooklyn Strong, trained by 37-year-old former jockey **Danny Velazquez**, began his career by winning a \$40,000 maiden claiming race at Delaware Park in his debut and then quickly moved up the ranks. In his second start, he finished third in the Bertram F. Bongard Stakes for New York-breds at Belmont. That was followed by back to back wins in the Sleepy Hollow Stakes, also for New York-breds, and the Remsen. In his lone start this year, he was fifth in the Wood Memorial Stakes (GII) April 3.

"I'm just excited to be here," Velazquez said. "Like I'm telling everyone, I have zero pressure. This is a lifelong dream. I was at the OBS sale last weekend and we decided to work him Monday. We were thinking Preakness, but then my partner (owner) Mark (Schwartz) told me we could maybe get in the Derby. I think Churchill called him and said we could enter the Pat Day Mile and AE for the Derby. Then on Sunday they called and said we were in. It's been crazy, been chaotic. I've had no sleep."

"It's been extremely hard with him. Nothing has been easy with him. It's been an up and down winter with him. He got a little sick on me. I'm not shocked this happened, but it's a bit ironic because of how tough things have been. I'm very happy with him. He settled in well and hasn't stopped eating."

Brooklyn Strong, who arrived early Tuesday morning, galloped for the first time over the Churchill Downs track Thursday morning. Depending on the weather, Velazquez hoped to school in the paddock Thursday during the races.

ESSENTIAL QUALITY, MANDALOUN – **Godolphin's Essential Quality** and **Juddmonte's Mandaloun** visited the starting gate prior to galloping about 1 5/8 miles.

Trainer **Brad Cox** watched from his usual perch from the second floor window of the five-eighths clocker stand.

"The serious work is over, now the fun begins," Cox said.

The duo will train at 5:15 a.m. Friday.

HELIUM, SOUP AND SANDWICH – **Mark Casse** was on the backstretch for the first time Thursday morning to oversee the training of **D J Stable's Helium** and **Live Oak Plantation's** homebred **Soup and Sandwich**. Assistant **David Carroll** had put both horses through their final preparations before Casse's arrival, and, instead of galloping, the big boss opted to split the difference and jog, as opposed to simply walking the shedrow.

"The track was muddy today and under normal circumstances I probably wouldn't have trained today and given them today off," Casse said. "So, the next best thing was to go out and jog. We're ready to go, we're happy with where they're at and we're as good as we can get. They're happy and healthy and we're just trying to maintain that. Training horses is like climbing a mountain; a lot of times the climb up to the top is the toughest part, and once you get there, you can relax a little."

HIDDEN STASH – **BBN Racing's Hidden Stash** jogged a mile at 7:30 a.m. with trainer **Vicki Oliver** aboard.

"I went out there earlier and it was pretty soupy so he just jogged," Oliver said. "At this stage, it is not going to make any difference."

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Hidden Stash closed his 2020 campaign with an allowance win at Churchill Downs before re-emerging at Tampa Bay Downs with a third-place finish in the Sam F. Davis (GIII) and a runner-up finish in the Tampa Bay Derby (GII). In his final prep for the Derby, he was fourth in the Blue Grass Stakes (GII) at Keeneland.

"All of the owners after the Blue Grass agreed that if he had a chance to get in the Derby go for it," Oliver said. "It was in the back of our minds, but when it looked like he was getting in, it moved to the front."

Oliver will be saddling her first Kentucky Derby starter, but she has a family link to a previous winner.

"The first Derby to stand out to me was **Genuine Risk** in 1980 when I was 8," Oliver said. "My mom (**Mrs. G. Watts Humphrey Jr.**) bred her. Then **Spend a Buck** going wire to wire in 1985; that sticks out."

HIGHLY MOTIVATED – **Klaravich Stables' Highly Motivated** jogged Thursday morning, as trainer **Chad Brown** opted to call a bit of an audible over the sloppy main track. The son of **Into Mischief** jogged once around for Brown, a former assistant to the legendary Hall of Famer **Bobby Frankel**.

"I generally don't gallop over sealed tracks, and my mentor didn't either," Brown said. "It's so close now, and he's doing so well, I played it safe. The track should be good and harrowed tomorrow so I'll go back to galloping."

HOT ROD CHARLIE – "I'm happy with him. In fact, I'm very happy."

Even on a bad day, it doesn't take much to get trainer **Doug O'Neill** to sing the praises of one of his horses. He's more than a glass half-full guy; he's a glass-overflowing type.

But this week when he's talked about his latest Kentucky Derby hopeful – the **Oxbow** colt **Hot Rod Charlie** – there seems to be an extra lilt in his voice and a wider smile on his face at the mention of the dark bay youngster's name.

Certainly, the "bargain" \$110,000 yearling buy has given his conditioner cause. When a young horse puts a million dollars in the bank after just seven starts, there's reason to break out the smiles. When he's been stakes-placed twice, then a stakes winner in three battles with graded company, that's a grinner, too. And when you note that his stakes efforts have all been around two turns – the most recent providing a smart tally at a mile and three sixteenths – it gives one a warm and fuzzy feeling that his mile and one-quarter testing this coming Saturday appears to be right up his proverbial alley.

Thursday morning – during the 7:30-7:45 special Derby/Oaks training period – the conditioner was trackside with a contingent of his believers to watch their hope skip through a mile and a quarter gallop with regular exercise rider **Jonny Garcia** enjoying the exercise. It was another constructive step along the road to red roses and more high fives than you can shake a stick at.

O'Neill said his colt would gallop again Friday, then walk the shedrow race day.

KEEPMEINMIND – **Keepmeinmind** was among the very first Kentucky Derby prospects on the track Thursday morning, galloping 1 ½ miles at his usual 5:30 a.m. time.

While the 2020 Kentucky Jockey Club Stakes (GII) winner is a considered a 50-1 outsider for the Kentucky Derby after two poor performances this year in the Rebel (GII) and Blue Grass (GII) Stakes, his trainer **Robertino Diodoro** and jockey **David Cohen** have not lost faith in the horse. This will be the first Kentucky Derby for both of them.

"He's really developed into a tremendous 3-year-old year," Cohen said. "I know his PP's don't show it, but he's grown from two to three the way we've wanted. He's been more aggressive this year and I think that's partly because of the blinkers. We're taking them off for Saturday. I'm just going to let him fall out of the gate, relax and make one run. I think the big field will actually help him. When he sees daylight, he gets aggressive. He likes to be covered up early."

KING FURY – A couple of heavyweights are going to meet for the first time Saturday at trainer **Kenny McPeck's** barn at Churchill Downs.

World heavyweight champion **Tyson Fury** took up McPeck's offer to be in the corner for **Fern Circle Stables, Three Chimneys Farm** and **Magdalena Racing's King Fury**, who spars with the heavyweight of 3-year-old colts, undefeated **Essential Quality**, in Kentucky Derby 147. Fury, who is training in Las Vegas, will fly in early Saturday to watch the horse, a 20-1 shot with **Brian Hernandez Jr.** riding, that was named in his honor.

This deal came together a lot faster than most boxing matches, starting with a social media exchange Tuesday and finalized Wednesday.

"Tyson Fury is coming, along with (boxing promoter) **Bob Arum**," said McPeck, "Along with some others from Top Rank Boxing. I had tagged (Fury) on Twitter, and his agent called me yesterday and asked, 'Are you serious?' And I told him yeah, c'mon, it'll be fun. So he's flying in Saturday. He's going to do some **Muhammad Ali** stuff, too, while he's here."

McPeck said Fury was not aware that the colt was named for him. "I named the horse ... I enjoyed the fight when he went into the fight with (**Deontay**) **Wilder** (in February 2020). When you're naming stallions, you want to name them something strong, and I thought it was ideal, and of course he's a good horse."

Plans call for Fury to meet King Fury at the barn, and for the fighter to walk over before the race to the paddock in his entourage. "He likes horse racing," McPeck said. "He's from Manchester, England, and evidently he's been to the races over there, and likes the races. I don't think he's done anything in American racing. But how many times do you get to have the heavyweight champ come over?"

"It's always something I've been interested in, the biggest horse race in the world," Fury told ESPN. "I've always wanted to go to the Kentucky Derby, never had the opportunity to do so. This is the opportunity to do so."

Arum, who's now 89, is a promoter and for a time was part of the Main Bout company operated by Ali, the late Louisville native who is considered the greatest boxing champion of all time. Ali is buried in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery, and the Muhammad Ali Center in downtown Louisville is a museum and activities center that recognizes his life.

"I like having fun. We all take it so seriously, everybody so uptight, this is as relaxed as I've ever been coming into an Oaks or a Derby," said McPeck, who told Fury on Twitter to contact him by direct message, which started the ball rolling for a VIP visit by the boxer. "We've got two horses who are training good, and the rest is up to a higher power."

On the track Thursday morning, King Fury repeated the usual routine called for by McPeck. During the period reserved for Kentucky Derby and Oaks horses, the winner of the Lexington (GIII) at Keeneland was sent for a maintenance 1 1/2-mile gallop with exercise rider **Lalo Jose Quiroz** aboard on the sealed racing surface.

LIKE THE KING – M Racing Group's Like the King jogged a mile alongside a pony with jockey **Drayden Van Dyke** aboard for trainer **Wesley Ward**.

Van Dyke, a 26-year-old Louisville native, will be aboard Saturday with his third Kentucky Derby mount.

His most vivid memory of the Derby came when he was 14.

"The first Derby I remember here was **Mine That Bird**," Van Dyke said of the 2009 Run for the Roses. "I watch that ride by **Calvin (Borel)**. I still go back and watch it. That is what sticks with me. I think it is one of the best rides in Derby history so far."

Unlike his previous two mounts, Van Dyke will be aboard a horse he rode in its most recent start prior to the Derby.

"I feel like this is my best chance," said Van Dyke, who was aboard for Like the King's victory in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII) at Turfway Park on March 27.

"He is very professional and has lots of talent. He idled when he got to the front (in the Jeff Ruby) and I knew I had more in the tank. I know he is a fighter."

Blake Heap accompanied Like the King to the track on the pony and he will be overseeing the colt's preparations this week for Ward. Heap saddled **Averly Jane** to victory in Wednesday afternoon's Kentucky Juvenile to give Ward his 1,997th career victory.

Ward has two horses entered today -- one at Churchill Downs and one at Belmont Park -- then three more here Friday and four more here in addition to Like the King on Derby Day.

MEDINA SPIRIT – Zedan Racing Stables' Medina Spirit was led out to the track by assistant trainer **Jimmy Barnes** at the special 7:30 a.m. Derby/Oaks training time and put in the

same strong gallop he has all week for exercise rider **Humberto Gomez**.

Hall of Trainer **Bob Baffert** has given the riding assignment to jockey **John Velazquez**, who was aboard Baffert's sixth Derby winner **Authentic** last year. A win would be a record seventh for Baffert and a fourth for Velazquez.

"Johnny is a really good rider," Baffert said. "The thing I like about him, his strength, is that he's an exceptionally good gate rider. A good speed rider and my horse is a speed horse. He'll keep him out of trouble. That's what Medina has going for him, he's very fast out of the gate. When you have 20 horses, that is the key."

MIDNIGHT BOURBON, SUPER STOCK – Winchell Thoroughbreds' Midnight Bourbon and Erv Woolsey's and trainer **Steve Asmussen's** father **Keith's Super Stock** both stretched their legs over the muddy main track Thursday morning in a pair of light gallops, with the former standing in the starting gate as well. An energized Midnight Bourbon also schooled in the paddock prior to Wednesday's fifth race, with Asmussen handling the son of **Tiznow**.

O BESOS – Bernard Racing, Tagg Team Racing, West Point Thoroughbreds and Terry L. Stephens' O Besos jogged one mile around 6:15 a.m. Thursday.

ROCK YOUR WORLD – Trainer **John Sadler** is a California boy so you'd probably be right to guess that he's not exactly an expert when it comes to dealing with rain. But Thursday morning at Churchill Downs he gave the impression he was an old hand with the elements.

The word – and the weatherman – said the next part of an overnight storm in Louisville was going to hit at 7 a.m. Several horsemen heeded that advice and moved their horses' exercises up to the 6 a.m. hour. Sadler preferred to stay with the 7:30-7:45 slot that was reserved only for Derby/Oaks horses, the big advantage to that being that just a few horses were on the track at that time rather than the dozens and dozens that can appear during any other training period.

Then the rain held off and **Rock Your World**, the **Candy Ride** colt the conditioner brought from California for his shot at the Kentucky Derby, got to get in his prep work with no crowd around him and no rain falling on his handsome dark bay coat.

Regular exercise rider **Javier Meza** was at the controls and together he and his partner went through a solid mile and one-quarter gallop.

"Just a straight forward, routine gallop," Sadler said afterward at Barn 43. "I'm happy with him and that the rain held off and we didn't get poured on."

THE FIELD FOR THE \$3 MILLION KENTUCKY DERBY PRESENTED BY WOODFORD RESERVE (GI) – Known Agenda (Irada Ortiz Jr., 6-1), **Like the King** (Drayden Van Dyke, 50-1), **Brooklyn Strong** (Umberto Rispoli, 50-1), **Keepmeinmind** (David Cohen, 50-1), **Sainthood** (Corey Lanerie, 50-1), **O Besos** (Marcelino Pedroza, 20-1), **Mandaloun** (Florent Geroux, 15-1), **Medina Spirit** (John Velazquez, 15-1), **Hot Rod Charlie** (Flavien Prat, 8-1), **Midnight Bourbon** (Mike Smith, 20-1), **Dynamic One** (Jose Ortiz, 20-1), **Helium** (Julien Leparoux, 50-1), **Hidden Stash** (Rafael Bejarano, 50-1), **Essential Quality** (Luis Saez, 2-1), **Rock Your World** (Joel Rosario, 5-1), **King Fury** (Brian Hernandez Jr., 20-1), **Highly Motivated** (Javier Castellano, 10-1), **Super Stock** (Ricardo Santana Jr., 30-1), **Soup and Sandwich** (Tyler Gaffalione, 30-1), **Bourbonic** (Kendrick Carmouche, 30-1). All starters will carry 126 pounds

LONGINES KENTUCKY OAKS UPDATE – Thursday was the final day of training for many competitors in Friday's Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI).

CLAIRIERE, PAULINE'S PEARL – Stonestreet Stables' homebreds **Pauline's Pearl** and **Clairiere** both hit the track early Thursday morning, well before the 7:30-7:45 allotted Derby and Oaks training period, and got in light gallops straight off the gap for trainer **Steve Asmussen**.

COACH, TRAVEL COLUMN – **OXO Equine's Travel Column** had her final preparation for Friday's Longines Kentucky Oaks with a spirited 1 ½ mile gallop at 5:15 a.m. with **Fernando Espinoza** aboard.

Her stablemate, **Kueber Racing's Coach**, galloped 1 ½ miles with **Mario Garcia** in the boot.

"That'll do it," trainer **Brad Cox** said. "Let's get it done."

Cox will attempt to win his third Kentucky Oaks in the last four years after accomplishing the Run for the Lilies in 2018 with **Monomoy Girl** and 2020 with **Shedaresthedevil**.

COMPETITIVE SPEED -- **John Minchello's Competitive Speed** jogged a mile under exercise rider **Anthony Gallo** to complete her Oaks training for trainer **Javier Gonzalez**.

Competitive Speed will be ridden in Friday's Oaks by **Chris Landeros** who will be hopping aboard for the first time.

"We do it all the time; it's just this is a bigger race," Landeros said of the race being the first time aboard a horse. I did the same thing with **Bodexpress** (in the 2019 Kentucky Derby)."

The day before he rode **Bodexpress**, he had finished fourth in the Oaks on **Champagne Anyone**.

"She has run in the same series of races at Gulfstream as Champagne Anyone," Landeros said of his Oaks mount. "I have watched replays of her races. She had a wide trip in Gulfstream Park Oaks, got fanned five wide and still ran on to only get beat by four lengths. That was a gutsy effort."

Competitive Speed will break from post 12 in the field of 13.

"I'd like to see her in mid-pack early after moving closer to the rail," Gonzalez said. "Then have Chris tip her out to make her run. She likes it better outside."

CRAZY BEAUTIFUL – **Phoenix Thoroughbred LTD's Crazy Beautiful** was on the sealed track in between showers Thursday. The winner of the Gulfstream Oaks (GII) appeared along with other Derby and Oaks contenders, including stablemate **King Fury**, when the 7:30 a.m. training period began. She galloped a few lengths ahead of her stablemate, following the same 1 ½-mile regimen with exercise rider **Danny Ramsey** called for by trainer **Kenny McPeck**.

"She's doing super," Ramsey said. "After she wins, I want the TV cameras to zoom in on me and listen to me singing."

MALATHAAT – Oaks favorite **Malathaath** was out for her early exercise at 6 a.m. with her usual partner, exercise rider **Amelia Green**, perched smartly on her back. Green, an Englishwoman by birth and an employee of trainer **Todd Pletcher** for the past four years, guided the daughter of **Curlin** through a steady gallop of a mile and one-eighth before heading back to Barn 42.

Pletcher had concern about an approaching storm, so he got his filly – along with his four Derby colts – out early to take care of business. Though their exercise was conducted over a sloppy Churchill Downs strip thanks to overnight rains, they all got to stay dry Thursday ahead of whatever the weatherman had drummed up for later in the morning.

Malathaath has been hung the 5-2 favorite for the 147th edition of the Kentucky Oaks and will start her mile and one-eighth journey out of post nine in the 14-horse field. Hall of Fame jockey **John Velazquez** will be her rider for the big one.

MARACUJA – **Beach Haven Thoroughbreds' Maracuja** jogged 1 ½ miles with the pony early Thursday morning for trainer **Rob Atras**, who is scheduled to arrive Thursday afternoon. The daughter of Honor Code went out around 6 a.m., as Atras' wife and assistant **Brittney**, was hoping to beat the rain. Maracuja has continued to handle her new surroundings like a seasoned pro, and with a late post for the Oaks (5:51 p.m.), may even have a bit light exercise Friday morning as well.

"She was really good again and we might even end up training tomorrow," Atras said. "We don't usually train on race days, but we also don't usually have a 6:00 p.m. post, so we'll play accordingly after Rob gets in. If it's not sloppy and sealed we may do a little something."

MILLEFEUILLE – **Juddmonte's Millefeuille** galloped a mile and three-eighths under exercise rider **Ailsa Morrison**.

Trainer **Bill Mott**, who is seeking his first victory in the Oaks, has not decided whether Millefeuille would go to the track in the morning.

With one scratch from the original field of 14, Millefeuille will be exiting post 13 under **Joel Rosario**, who, like Mott, is seeking his first Oaks victory.

If recent history is any indicator, the outside portion of the starting gate is the place to be. From 2016 to 2019, when the Oaks had a 14-horse field the winners all came from outside draws.

In 2016, **Cathryn Sophia** and **Land Over Sea** ran 1-2 out of posts 12 and 13, respectively, **Abel Tasman** won from the 13 in 2017, **Monomoy Girl** from the 14 in 2018 and **Serengeti Empress** from the 13 in 2019.

MORAZ – Trainer **Michael McCarthy** sent his Kentucky Oaks filly **Moraz** trackside during the 7:30-7:45 special training period that is limited to runners in Friday's Oaks or Saturday's Kentucky Derby. He had her usual exercise rider – the Ukrainian horsewoman **Olha Krushevskaya** – in the tack and the pair stayed close to the rail on a sloppy surface as they covered a mile and three eighths on the big Churchill oval.

McCarthy was asked how he was feeling about his daughter of **Empire Maker** the day before her date in the \$1.25 million Run for the Lilies.

"I'm very happy; very, very happy," the 49-year-old horseman said. "I have an extreme amount of faith in her."

Moraz never has been worse than third in her five lifetime starts – all around two turns – and she is stakes placed in her last three outings. She will break from post eight the nine-furlong Oaks and will have the saddle services of California's top rider, **Flavien Prat**.

PASS THE CHAMPAGNE – The husband and wife team of **George Weaver** and **Cindy Hutter** continued their daily routine with Kentucky Oaks hopeful **Pass the Champagne** Thursday morning. Weaver ponied the filly and Hutter out to the track and then watched as the pair galloped 1 ½ miles over the sloppy track.

Weaver and Hutter will be starting their first horse in the Kentucky Oaks, but are no strangers to the big race events. Both worked for Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas** before going to work for two-time Kentucky Derby winning trainer **Todd Pletcher**.

"It feels great," Weaver said when asked about having his first Oaks starter. "It will feel even better if she wins. The filly is doing really well."

SEARCH RESULTS – **Klaravich Stables' Search Results** jogged Thursday morning for trainer **Chad Brown**, who has mentioned throughout the week that he's been impressed with how the undefeated daughter of **Flatter** has handled the main track.

WILL'S SECRET – **Willis Horton's** Honeybee (GIII) winner **Will's Secret** had her final training session prior to Friday's Oaks with a 1 ½-mile gallop for trainer **Dallas Stewart**.

"She showed how talented she was this winter in Arkansas and ran a good race at Keeneland. I think she can return to the Honeybee form in the Oaks. She's live," Stewart said.

THE FIELD FOR THE \$1.25 MILLION LONGINES KENTUCKY OAKS – **Pauline's Pearl** (Ricardo Santana Jr.,

20-1), **Maracuja** (Kendrick Carmouche, 20-1), **Clairiere** (Tyler Gaffalione, 5-1), **Crazy Beautiful** (Jose Ortiz, 15-1), **Pass the Champagne** (Javier Castellano, 15-1), **Travel Column** (Florent Geroux, 3-1), ~~**Ava's Grace** (David Cohen, 50-1)~~, **Moraz** (Flavien Prat (30-1), **Coach** (Luis Saez, 50-1), **Malathaat** (John Velazquez, 5-2), **Will's Secret** (Jon Court, 30-1), **Search Results** (Irad Ortiz Jr., 3-1), **Competitive Speed** (Chris Landeros, 50-1), **Millefeuille** (Joel Rosario, 20-1). All starters will carry 121 pounds.

MAXFIELD RETURNS TO CHURCHILL DOWNS IN ALYSHEBA – **Godolphin's Maxfield** might no longer be undefeated, career-wise, but he's looking to make it 3-for-3 at Churchill Downs in Friday's \$400,000 Alysheba presented by Sentient Jet (GII).

The 4-year-old homebred son of **Street Sense**, out of the **Bernardini** mare **Velvety**, was made the 4-5 morning line favorite. Maxfield drew the outside No. 6 post for the 18th running of the Alysheba for older horses, going 1 1/16 miles on the main track.

After streaking to victories in the first five starts of his career, all east of the Mississippi, Maxfield was a beaten favorite in the Santa Anita Handicap (GI) on March 6. Idol flew home to win the stakes, with **Express Train** coming home second and Maxfield finishing third.

"I thought he ran well, yeah I did, beaten a couple of lengths," trainer **Brendan Walsh** said, noting there were "a lot of things working against him."

"I ran him back soon, three weeks after his previous run," Walsh said. "He had to give weight all around, a different track at a mile-and-a-quarter for the first time."

"But I think under the circumstances, he ran well, and he'll benefit from the race. I think it'll improve him a lot. We'll see on Friday."

Churchill Downs is where Maxfield broke his maiden in September 2019, and where he won the Matt Winn (GIII) last May as he blossomed as a 3-year-old. And he'll again be running a shorter, perhaps more comfortable, distance.

Jose Ortiz, who scored Maxfield's first three career wins, has the mount on Friday in the Alysheba, carded as the sixth of 13 races on the Oaks Day program. Post time is 1:26 p.m.

The field for the Alysheba, with riders and weights from the rail out, is: **Visitant** (Umberto Rispoli, 118 pounds), **Sonneman** (Ricardo Santana Jr., 118), **Attachment Rate** (Joe Talamo, 118), **Chess Chief** (Luis Saez, 120), Roadster (Irad Ortiz Jr., 118), Maxfield (Jose Ortiz, 120).

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